

people came to look upon the fruits of the earth as themselves divine. Instead of as being the work of divinities : in short, they mistook the creature for the creator. In like manner Plutarch would explain the Egyptian worship of animals as reverence done not so much to the beasts themselves as to the great god who displays the divine handiwork in sentient organisms even more than in the most beautiful and wonderful works of inanimate nature.¹

The comparative study of religion has proved that these his theory theories of Plutarch are an Inversion of the truth. Fetishism, ^{!s an}.

^{' inversion}

or the view that the fruits of the earth and things in general of the are divine or animated by powerful spirits, is not, as Plutarch f[^]hLm^r Imagined, a late corruption of a pure and primitive theism, is the which regarded the gods as the creators and givers of all notThe^{^111'} good things. On the contrary, fetishism is early and theism corruption, Is late in the history of mankind. In this respect Xenophanes, whom Plutarch attempts to correct, displayed a much truer insight into the mind of the savage. To weep crocodile Laments-tears over the animals and plants -which he kills and eats, ^{! TM TM °zfo*} and to pray them to come again in order that they may be again eaten and again lamented—this may seem absurd ^{^i_c h h^{utS}} to us, but It Is precisely what the savage does. And from kills and his point of view the proceeding is not at all absurd but perfectly rational and well calculated to answer his ends. For he sincerely believes that animals and fruits are tenanted by spirits who can harm him If they please, and who cannot but be put to considerable inconvenience by that destruction of their bodies which Is unfortunately Inseparable from the

processes of mastication and digestion. What more natural, therefore, than that the savage should offer excuses to the beasts and the fruits for the painful necessity he is under of consuming them, and that he should endeavour to alleviate their pangs by soft words and an air of respectful sympathy, in order that they may bear him no grudge, and may in due time come • again to be again eaten and again lamented ? Judged by the standard of primitive manners the attitude of the walrus to the oysters was strictly correct:—

¹ Plutarch, *Isis et Osiris*, 77.